THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has permitted the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) notified under the 'Rules 1989' of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 (EPA) to consider any application for grant of approval in accordance with law and after taking into consideration all aspects of biosafety. The GEAC is following a case by case approval in accordance with the rules and guidelines framed under the EPA, 1986 for evaluating environmental and health safety aspects of genetically modified crops.

(c) and (d) Bt cotton is the only transgenic crops approved for commercial cultivation in India since 2002. Presently, 135 Bt cotton hybrids expressing MON 531 (*Cryl Ac* gene), MON 15985 (*Cry 1Ac+Cry 2Ab* gene), JK Event 1 (*Cry 1 Ac* gene) and GFM (*Cry 1A* gene) are under commercial cultivation in India.

Absence of forest officials

1444. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that Nagarjuna Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh, Indravati reserves in Chhattisgarh and Palamau in Jharkhand have fallen to Naxals;

(b) the number of forest officials who were deputed there and the number of vacancies exist there;

(c) whether Government is aware that due to absence of forest officials in these reserve forests, the cases of poaching and cutting of forests is on the rise;

(d) if so, in what manner Government is monitoring these reserves in the absence of officials; and

(e) the steps Government is taking to wipe out gangs and poachers operating from these reserves?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) Law and order being a State subject, action with the respect to various aspects/issues related to Naxalite activities lies primarily in the domain of the concerned State Government. The Central Government, however, supplements their efforts and resources by a variety of measures. As per the information furnished by the States, Palamau Tiger Reserve in Jharkhand and Indravati Reserve in Chhattisgarh are reported to be affected by Naxalite activities.

(b) Numbers of forest officials deputed and the numbers of vacancies existing are as follows:

Sl. No.	Reserves Forest/States	No. of official deputed	Vacancies
1	Palamau Tiger Reserve/ Jharkhand	110	94
2	Indravati Reserves/ Chhattisgarh	53	19
3	Nagarjuna Srisailam/ Andhra Pradesh	395	64

(c) Efforts are being made to protect the forest and wildlife with the help of forest staff. In these areas, the support of local communities for protection and management is ensured through eco-development committees, tiger tracking forces etc.

(d) and (e) For protection and management of forest and wildlife, following steps have been taken by the Government of India and State/UT Governments-

- Legal protection measures like Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 etc. are in place.
- Financial measures, like providing assistance to the States/Union Territories under Centrally Sponsored Scheme *i.e.* Integrated Forest Protection Scheme, Development of National Park and Sanctuaries, Project Tiger, Project Elephant, etc.
- Constant patrolling of the area including flying squads, mobile protection units etc.
- Creation of check posts and barriers.
- Involvement of local communities through Joint Forest Management Committees/ Eco-development committees etc.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation has been empowered under the wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders.
- The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been setup for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and its products.

UNESCO notice to Bharatpur sanctuary

1445. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 40,000 pelicans, flamingos, Siberian Cranes and other migratory birds that made the Keoladeo National Park of Rajasthan in Bharatpur their annual winter retreat, have now altered their flight plans;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this prompted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to issue a notice to Bharatpur sanctuary that it would withdraw its world heritage status if the same situation continues, and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to restore the wetland character of park?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) It is true that during the years 2006-07 and 2007-08, Keoladeo National Park of Rajasthan in Bharatpur have been visited by comparatively lesser number of migratory birds with that of the previous years. However, it is mentioned that Sibrerian cranes have not visited the Keoladeo National Park after 2001-02.

(b) The World Heritage Committee in their meeting held during 2005 at Durban, expressed serious concern over the situation of Keoladeo National Park resulting from inadequate availability of water to maintain the wetland ecosystem. In their next meeting held at Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2006, the World Heritage Committee sought an updated, comprehensive report on the state of conservation of the World Heritage property along with the requested to implement long term solutions for water problem of the Park.